



September Newsletter

2025



Contents

Welcome
Dates for your diary
Seen around the internet
Tips for September
Newbury & District BKA News – Becca Hall
Vale & Downland BKA News - John Broadbent
Adverts

Welcome

Well, how was the season for you? I finally got my wasps under control by deploying two 'WaspBanes' in my main apiary - costly but effective. I suppose the huge number of wasps should have given us a clue that this would be a bad Asian Hornet year. By bad, I mean really bad. As of 22nd August there had been a total of 266 confirmed sightings and 74 confirmed nests. I dread to think how many may be undetected. Today (27th) we received an email best described as a call to arms, identifying a high risk area which both Newbury and Vale are either just inside or just on the edge of, asking for BBKA AHAT teams to be very vigilant with their monitoring traps. Mine will be going back out tomorrow as we are approaching peak time (given the hot weather the peak may even be now) for literally hundreds of virgin queen hornets to leave their nests in search of a mate. Not many have to succeed to cause mayhem next year. Given the past spread of this pest, I expected that we would have a couple more years, but maybe next year will be the first time members find hornets preying their colonies.



All members are encouraged to do everything we can to continue raising awareness - many of this years successful sightings have been called in by the general public rather than beekeepers, so the message is getting through. 1st to 8th September is Asian Hornet Week, as reported in the September BBKA news. There is a useful talk and various

resources available through the BBKA Learning Portal at <https://tinyurl.com/49k32azu>
And don't forget to wear yellow socks next week to remind everyone that one of the main distinguishing features of the Asian Hornet are yellow legs!

Again, a reminder that Newbury's 2025 Berkshire Honey Show will take place at the showground from 20/21 Sep. Please do support it and enter as well as visiting, it is such a lot of work to organise and run something like this and the team deserves all of our support. For further details, contact honeyshow@newburybeekeepers.org.uk

I hope your honey is now all in buckets and your treatments, if you use them, are in and that you are feeding bees that need feeding. Those Winter bees need the best start in life you can give them. It's now only 120 days until Christmas 😊

PS As another season comes to a close, the news will be pretty thin for the next few months. If you want to send a letter (bee related and printable please!) or even write an article, please do contact me at the email address at the bottom of the page

John

Dates for your diary

<u>Newbury & District</u>
NDBKA members please ensure you have remembered the venue change for meetings. Meetings will be Tuesday 7:30pm-9:30pm at St Mary's Church Shaw cum Donnington in the church hall RG14 2DR Saturday 21st and 22nd September – Honey Show at Newbury Showground/ Celebration of beekeeping. Come visit the marquee - chat and bees October meeting - Details tbc, watch out for an email
<u>Vale & Downland</u>
Sunday 14th September Wax & Candle Course - Red Barn Friday 24th October - 7.30pm AGM + Talk tbc Saturday 22nd November – Fun Honey Show & Social
30th September Closing date to apply for BBKA November Modules 23rd – 25th October National Honey Show Sandown Park

Seen around the internet

New use for Honey The BBC had an article on the use of honey to help heal perineal tears post childbirth (who says our topics aren't far ranging!) here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czxp2d7yq13o>

Thankfully, I couldn't find an appropriate picture to accompany this article....

Innovative Pollen Replacement Research Regardless of your views on the causes of climate change, things are changing. Why should this worry us as beekeepers? Well, an increasing problem is that bees and flowers can get out of sync with each other. Coming out of Winter, bees have evolved to increase their colony size to coincide with major Spring flows. If these flows come early due to warmer weather, the bees just don't have the numbers to take full advantage of what is on offer and they can't adapt as quickly as the changes are taking place. Like this year, if things finish too early, the June gap becomes the June/July/August gap. Not

ideal. Professor Geraldine Wright from Oxford University (and Chair of Oxford BKA) has recently been part of a team studying what feeds they could develop to get bees through pollen gaps. As you hopefully know, bees need to collect up to 15 different kinds of pollen to gather all the different amino acids, nutrients and minerals they need to produce high quality brood food. Prof Geraldine's team genetically engineered a strain of yeast to produce all the good stuff needed and



The new pollen substitute is spread on top bars as part of testing
© University of Oxford 2025

hope that eventually this may be made available commercially. I hope they do - my own experience with pollen patties and pollen substitute has been a bit hit and miss. (As an aside, I'm hoping that Prof Geraldine can be persuaded to give Vale and Downland one of our Winter talks. I'll keep you posted)

BBC article is here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c776kynn771o>

Paper in Nature is here: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-025-09431-y>

News update from University of Oxford website: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/news/2025-08-20-saving-bees-superfoods-new-engineered-supplement-found-boost-colony-reproduction>

Thanks to Robert Scotland for sending me the links.

Talk by Professor Jamie Ellis on Pests of Honey Bee Diseases - 3rd September
Cambridgeshire BKA have kindly opened up their forthcoming online talk on 'Pests of Honey Bee Colonies' to all beekeepers. The talk is by Jamie Ellis, Professor of Entomology at the University of Florida, who is a regular guest speaker at our own National Honey Show. I've seen him several times and he is excellent.

You will need to book a ticket (free) to gain entrance to the online presentation. The link is here:

Highly recommended and will be well worth your time.

Tips for September

- Varroa treatments should be underway or completed. Remember, you want to hit the varroa as hard as possible before most of the Winter bees are laid to keep them DWV free.
- Feeding. Tricky to know when and how much to feed as a flow keeps starting and stopping for no apparent reason. It looks like there will be a lot of ivy honey collected, given the plants I have seen are absolutely covered in flowers about to open. Yes, I know it is very early. This is where judgement comes in. A medium to large colony needs 35-40lb (17-18kg) of stores to get through Winter and into Spring. A National deep frame of solid stores weighs about 5lb and a super frame 3lb. So, you need to feed, or they need to collect, until there are 7 full brood frames or 10+ super frames, or a suitable combination of both. There also needs to be somewhere for the queen to lay those Winter bees. If you overfeed, the bees won't just stop collecting ivy honey, they will just keep filling cells until there is no space left. If you have a feed super, you can either nadir it underneath or leave on top, but either way the queen excluder will need to come out at some point so the cluster can move around freely in the Winter.
- If you haven't already, treat any stacks of boxes for wax moth using either acetic acid or sulphur strips. A word of warning to anyone who has stored their supers in the PARKLA bags (other storage bags are available...) discussed last



Surrey Bees brood box storage bag - you will absolutely have to treat for wax moth (and preferably freeze any frames for 48 hours as well) before storing

month. You should only do this after they have been treated for wax moth. The idea that wax moth will only go for brood frames is a bit of a myth. Thanks to Paul Hatcher who warned me that after leaving his supers in the bags for only a couple of weeks, meaning to treat them later, opened them up to find 7 supers destroyed by the pests. An expensive find. Vale member Robert Scotland has found a similar bag suitable for storing brood boxes (the description on the web page says they are for supers, but Robert has found they also fit National brood boxes). £5 each from <https://surreybees.co.uk/product/zipper-bags/> I haven't seen any other retailer selling bags like this for brood boxes.



Remember to treat for wax moth BEFORE storing your supers away in these nice PARKLA bags



2025 BERKSHIRE HONEY SHOW ENTRY FORMS

Please select and complete the appropriate forms below to enter the 2025 Berkshire Honey Show. Take time to review the form prior to submitting your entry and please keep your own record of the classes you've entered. Any queries should be directed to the show secretary by emailing honeyshow@newburybeekeepers.org.uk

 OPEN CLASS ENTRY FORM Open to competitors from all invited associations including NDBKA. CLICK HERE	 OPEN NOVICE CLASS ENTRY FORM Open to any member who has never won first prize in a honey show. CLICK HERE	 NDBKA OPEN CLASS ENTRY FORM Only open to competitors who are members of NDBKA. CLICK HERE	 NDBKA NOVICE CLASS ENTRY FORM Open to any NDBKA member who have never won first prize in a honey show. CLICK HERE
---	---	---	---

<https://www.newburybeekeepers.org.uk/entry>

Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September– Newbury Show. We are hosting our Berkshire Honey Show alongside our event tent at Newbury Show ground. Entries are open for the Honey Show, come and show your beekeeping crafts / goods! This is a fabulous event to celebrate beekeeping products; come along to the show with family / friends and share the joy of beekeeping.



If you can spare time perhaps for a morning or afternoon on either day; or help with pack down on Sunday, we would gratefully appreciate any support.

If you can give any time alongside the Committee to support at any of these events, please can you email secretary@newburybeekeepers.org.uk

October members meet – This will be confirmed via email as to whether we can do one more apiary visit, or this may be an evening members meeting.

Rookie error – by Louisa Houghton

Note to Self. Always remember to zip up your bee suit before opening a hive.

The hot weather has turned our hives into hordes of raging six-legged, winged savages bent on violence. You can hear them before you see them, buzzing clouds flying in and out, while entry to the hive is guarded by an angry clump of defenders. As dusk falls, the ranks of sentries expands to form a humming, fluttering doorway of wings and stripes, keeping robbers out, and the temperature level.

It's a well-oiled magnificent machine, and one that doesn't suffer fools in bee suits gladly. Therefore try to imagine if you will, the outrage of these colonies, at having their worlds disturbed by humans. Homes opened and honey plundered. It doesn't go down well.

Since keeping bees I've got better at being calm around swarms of them boiling around me. If they're not going for my face, that's OK. Mostly they're going about their business if I take deep breaths and look closely. When it's a face-job, I'll walk around the garden for a bit and then come back. Bite sized chunks of whatever I'm doing, but preferably not chunks out of me.

Until last weekend. It was hot and we'd been extracting for what felt like hours. Tiring, sweaty, thankless work with the bees apoplectic. As afternoon morphed into evening, my

thoughts turned to a cold cider and the Antiques Roadshow. The end was in sight, all I had to do was return the frames to their rightful owners, close up and take a well-earned break. I hurried across to the last hive and opened it up.

It took me a few seconds for the penny to drop that there were bees in my veil. But drop it did, with a sickening thud (as my old mum would have said). The golden rule of having bees breach your suit – stay calm. Reader I failed. I ran shrieking down the garden, swatting at the bees on my face until I reached the kitchen and my husband, with pinpoint accuracy, plucked the stings from my lip and the corner of my eye.

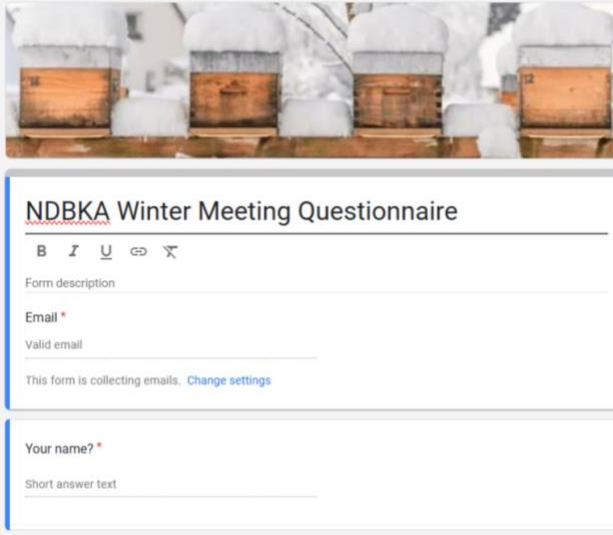
I got my cider. I also ended up looking like a Love Island contestant with botched lip filler within half an hour as the sting under my lower lip worked its magic. My eye socket was agony and by morning, the entire left side of my face had swollen up, and I couldn't open my left eye at all.

It took three days for my face to return to a normal shape. Thank heavens for Germolene, which went on the second after the stings had come out, and antihistamines. And last but far from least, for my husband, who heroically finished all the honey extraction and put the hives back together.

Suffice to say that's one rookie error I shall not be making again.

NDBKA members questionnaire – winter meetings

We offer monthly meetings for members across winter which aims to continue learning and preparation for the active season as well as of course social bee chat alongside cup of tea and biscuit! We need to book venue and speakers for this winter and would like to give an opportunity for members feedback. This link is to a short questionnaire to gather your view on venue, days and what you would like to learn about. Please complete by September 14th so as we can then proceed with sorting the Winter programme.



https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfTYjI0StTeVa8GVnh1ro6RINFxYWBha_18wehYK--c2FpHjw/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=113869388999884851202

BBKA Modules and Assessments Yvonne Horner (NDKBA Exam Secretary)

Dear Members, I wanted to remind you that there are number of exams that are run by the BBKA. These cover a wide range of topics and are both a range of written or practical exams.

The first one that you need to do is the BBKA Basic, as you need to have completed this to progress onto the other modules. (Editor's note: No longer a requirement for the modules, but it is recommended that you have kept bees for 2 seasons. "Only Registered, Partner or Honorary members of the BBKA are eligible to sit any BBKA module examination. Members are recommended to have kept and managed honey bees for at least 2 seasons before attempting the module examinations.")

Unfortunately this year I did not manage to arrange a date for the Basic to be held and so if you are interested in this and other modules please let me know and I will arrange a date(s) in June/July 2026 (Editor's note: Hi, I can do your Basic assessments next year if you need an assessor. I'm very kind 😊)

BBKA BASIC

This is the first step for anyone interested in following the BBKA assessment pathway. The BASIC assessment is suitable for anyone who has kept one hive of bees for at least a year. There are two parts:

- Opening and manipulating a colony of bees. You will be asked to identify various features of the hive and the colony.
- Verbal questions about the types of topics covered in the beginners course: Swarming, Pest and diseases etc.

There is nothing in the Basic exam that should be overly challenging if you have completed the beginners course and backed that up with 12 months practical beekeeping. We would run a refresher evening in the week or two before just to run through. If you're interested in finding out more or registering for 2026 then please contact Yvonne Horner

Other BBKA Modules

Once you have completed the BASIC Assessment there are another 8 modules that you can take, see attached syllabus for further details. They can be taken in any order, but Module 8 has to be taken last.

These exams are held on dates set by the BBKA and there are normally 2 per year (March and November). There are cut off dates for these and the November exams have a cut off of 30 September 2025, with all modules being taken on 15 November 2025.

You can take the exam remotely if you have access to a computer, the BBKA supply logon information in advance to test your connection, or you can attend their venue and sit the exams. You can do more than one module at a time but as there is a time window with which to complete the exams I would suggest not doing more than 2 as this will allow you time for a break between modules.

These Modules do require more study time as you will need to prepare in advance as they are closed book exams.

If you are interested in any of these modules please contact Yvonne Horner so that you can be registered and an online application form sent to you.

Finally, there are some **BBKA Practical Modules:**
There are a number of practical assessments inc:

Honey Bee health certificate: This is entry level. Need to have done the Basic and at least 1 year experience. Meant to be a follow on from basic - pests & diseases.	General Husbandry: There are deadlines / links BBKA then organise Have to have done basic Complete assessment of your bee keeping using own apiary Covers extraction equipment, storage of equipment. Need a minimum number of hives	Advanced husbandry: This is run at BBKA offices There are 5 modules: 1) mini presentation on given topic 2) queen rearing 3) Practicals x 2 - 45 mins each 4) interview 5) Microscopy Need to pass all modules to gain this Advanced Husbandry Certification
--	--	---

NOTE: If you are interested in any of the BBKA exams then the deadlines for this year are 30 September 2025, with all modules being taken on 15 November 2025.

2026 Basic Assessment - Register interest now, but I will provide more details and a cut off date in the new year

Vale & Downland BKA – John Broadbent

Just a short report this month. If anyone would like to take over writing the V&D news, please DO let me know ☺

New Members We have started signing people up for the Winter Beginners' Course. Please welcome new members:

- Kirsty Gunn
- Stuart Williams
- Brian Hendy

Education

Donation Many thanks to member Jeremy Slatter who has donated £80 to be used for educational purposes following the sale of bees and equipment. All donations are very gratefully received.

Basic Assessment Huge congratulations to Robert Scotland and Paul Hatcher who both gained Distinctions in their Basic Assessment. All that hard work paid off!

Module 1 Study Group The module 1 Study Group has now been running for 2 weeks and is off to a flying start with 8 members taking part. Hopefully most will also take the exam in November, although this is not a requirement for the course.

Wax Day - 14th September We still have places available for the wax day on the 14th of September at the Red Barn (also open to Newbury members). The cost is £10 and we will go through:

- How to turn those cappings into wax fit for candles
- Everyone makes a moulded candle to take away
- (Probably wonky) Dipped candle to take away
- Rolled candle to take away
- Demonstration of a simple way of making a wax wrap + a few other things to do with wax (time allowing)

The course will run from 10am to 3pm with a break in the middle for (your own) packed lunch. All materials and tea and coffee provided. Should be fun.

I will be sending an email out to everyone I think has registered by Sunday afternoon. If you haven't received an email by Monday, it is because my admin is rubbish. Please email me at education@valeanddownlandbees.org.uk to remind me.



Testing a range of candles

Thanks to Malcolm for yet another big bucket of cappings and to Caroline who has donated a huge block of nice wax. We now should have enough for what we need, although I will be processing stupid amounts of cappings from now until the course.

Hope to see you there.

Apiary Update Please note, there will **not** be a members' session on Saturday 30th August. The road down to the apiary is closed and we won't have access. The next members' session will be on Saturday 6th September at 1pm. We will email beforehand to confirm.

In the meantime, all the colonies have been fed and we have moved the colony in the Dartington, which somehow lost its queen, into a 14 x 12 with a new queen.

BBKA Fee Increase Update Please note that the BBKA fees will increase in October from £21/year to £23/year. I have recently had an email as part of the pre-ADM paperwork noting that the BBKA has a deficit of £46,147 (expected - £47,478) this year and will be seeking for a further small increase to be approved by delegates at the January ADM. This will not take effect until April 2027. The BBKA has spent a lot of money recently on Asian Hornet campaigns, and I think this has been effective. As reported at the start of the newsletter, most sightings and reports this year have been made by non-beekeepers, so something is cutting through. My recommendation (if I am ADM delegate again) is to vote in favour of this - I do think that membership, at less than

£2/month is good value and hardly covers even the cost of postage for the monthly BBKA News. To put that in perspective, it is less than 1 small latte at Costa or Starbucks.

Adverts

Karin Hall Equipment Sale

Approx 5 complete Langstroth hives, all cedar parts, purchased mainly from Thornes and last used 6-7 years ago. Wood is sound, but needs a clean up. Also various feeders, boards, unassembled super frame packs, manual 3 frame extractor and associated extracting accessories. Prefer sale as single lot, but can sell extracting equipment separately. Buyer to collect from the Racecourse Estate in Newbury. Please contact Karin via email karinhall@hotmail.co.uk or mobile 07557 534713 for full details, pictures and pricing.

Ben Tichband - SIPA Honey Bees Limited

We have Buckfast mated queens, virgins, Nucleus and full colonies for sale. We can supply on National or 14x12, alternatively as packages for top bar and other hive types. All our bees are raised in our own West Berkshire apiaries. We offer a 10% discount to members of NDBKA and VDBKA. info@honeybeenucs.co.uk

John Belcher

Please call John Belcher on 01189842321 or 07929586037 or email john.r.belcher@talktalk.net for bees, hive equipment, extraction supplies, feed, and general requirements for beekeeping, mostly in stock in Pangbourne RG8 7LB or available online from supplier.

Beckys Beezzzs Ltd

Nucs of bees, UK Bred mated queens, beekeeping equipment, bee feed & treatments beckysbeesonlineshop.co.uk 01264 351104

Please note: All Newbury & Vale members can place an advert free of charge for up to 3 months. Adverts should preferably be 5 lines or less.